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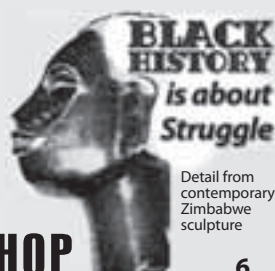


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**BUSH BUDGET**

**Feast for military, famine for people**

**Will Democrats let him get away with it?**

By LeiLani Dowell

Even the corporate papers are saying it's unbelievable. Yet it's only so in its blatancy.

For his last budget before retiring from a much-hated presidency—at a time of an economic crisis that affects workers most—President George W. Bush has proposed propping up the military budget to unprecedented levels while slashing domestic programs left and right and making his tax cuts for rich people permanent.

Bush's proposed figure of \$515.4 billion in military spending roughly equals the sum of the military budgets of the rest of the world's countries. The Washington Post reports that this figure "is 7.5 percent higher than the current year's and promises to fund some of the armed forces' largest and most costly weapons programs." (Feb. 11)

However, this figure doesn't even include the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, to the tune of another \$70 billion—and that's just until Bush's term ends, at which point Pentagon officials expect the new president to fund the wars with billions more. (Washington Post, Feb. 5).

Add to that amount other items not in the budget—such as billions for nuclear warheads and for other agencies like the FBI—and "War Stories" columnist Fred Kaplan suggests that the military budget climbs to a whopping \$713 billion! (Slate.com, Feb. 4)

To accommodate this growth in military spending, the Washington Post reports that Bush's plan would "slice \$14.2 billion from the growth of federal health-care programs in 2009, eliminate scores of programs and virtually freeze domestic programs." (Feb. 5)

Remember the continuing crisis of AIDS, particularly in communities of color? Remember the decaying U.S. educational system, thanks in part to Bush's No Child Left Behind program? Remember the housing crisis that is making people homeless throughout the country? Remember the survivors of hurricanes Katrina and Rita?

The Post continues, "The plan would ... extend abstinence

education programs [and] create elementary and secondary school vouchers. ... Among the programs Bush would eliminate are food programs for poor children ... weatherization assistance, community development grants ... and a public housing revitalization program that the House just overwhelmingly authorized."

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports that "nearly every area of the domestic budget" would be hit, resulting in 200,000 fewer children receiving childcare assistance; 100,000 fewer households receiving housing voucher assistance; \$433 million less funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; \$330 million less funding for the Environmental Protection Agency; cuts of \$18.2 billion to Medicaid over five years and \$556 billion to Medicare in 10 years; and a reduction in the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which would have to drop more than 1 million families and elderly from the program, reduce the amount of assistance provided by 22 percent, or a combination of the two. (www.cbpp.org, Feb. 7)

And yet, Bush won't let the rich suffer over his bloated military budget. The same report states that Bush's tax giveaways to the rich will cost \$2.4 trillion over the next 10 years. The Center says that combined tax cuts to households with annual incomes of more than \$1 million—just 0.3 percent of the country's households—"would exceed the entire amount that the federal government spends on elementary and secondary education, as well as the entire amount that it devotes to medical care for the nation's veterans."

Bush has projected a more than \$400 billion deficit as a result of this budget, assuming the country's economic growth of 2.7 percent this year, a figure that seems unlikely in a period leaning towards recession.

Analysts and media outlets are saying that this is a mess that Bush is leaving for the next president to clean up. However, as always, the burden will not be felt by the politicians, but by the workers, who will suffer needlessly while the government feeds "defense" contractors and the drive for more war. And as always, it will only be the workers' struggles that have the possibility of pushing these attacks back. □

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7,000 protest Security Conference (SiKo) in Munich Feb. 9 as Defense Secretary Gates demands more troops to Afghanistan.



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# Recalling the Great Depression's anti-eviction struggles

By David Hoskins

U.S. workers are encouraged to aspire toward the American Dream—combine fiscal discipline with a solid work ethic to lift yourself up, purchase your own home and retire with a sense of dignity and security. For every worker forced out of their home by the companies that abused them with racist, predatory lending tactics, the American Dream has been exposed as just that—a dream, pedaled by those with power to ensure those without are busy competing with each other in pursuit of an illusory promised land.

Economists and industry experts are predicting that foreclosures and unemployment will increase into 2009. The mortgage crisis has spread to other areas of the economy and now threatens the stability of global markets. Recession is the latest buzzword among economists, the media and politicians. The multinational working class is always the worst hit by economic downturns as it is left to fend for itself while Washington busies itself with the task of bailing out the corporations that manufactured the crisis.

The plight of workers facing foreclosure on their homes is reminiscent of the Depression-era struggle against housing evictions led by unemployed workers.

## Great Depression woes

The 1920s were a decade of incredible wealth for the U.S. ruling class. National income rose from \$60 billion in 1922 to \$87 billion in 1929. The index of industrial production reached a record high in June of 1929.

Despite the strong economy, it was clear that U.S. capitalism was not designed to benefit the workers on whom it depended. The increase in profit and productivity did not prompt businesses to expand their workforce. Depressed farm prices pushed millions of farmers into the cities to look for work. Unprecedented prosperity and high unemployment existed side by side throughout the decade.

The fact that such little wealth had trickled down to the workers who actually produced it did not deter economists and journalists from trumpeting the 1920s economy as proof that capitalism had overcome the cyclical crises and depressions that had besieged it over the last century.

Yet in 1929, the production index suddenly declined from its June record, and on Oct. 24 the stock market crashed on infamous “Black Thursday.” Unemployment immediately shot up. The number of workers laid off or fired rose to 2.5 million within two weeks. Official estimates on the number of unemployed show an increase from 429,000 in 1929 to 4,065,000 in January 1930. The number reached 12 million by 1932.

Cities such as Toledo, Ohio, were ravaged as the unemployment rate for males hovered around 40 percent. Fifty percent of Cleveland’s industrial workforce was unemployed and at some points only 10 percent of New York garment workers were employed. Black workers suffered disproportionately, with an unemployment rate around 66 percent for most of the depression.

Personal loan companies discovered that as much as half of their outstanding loans were to workers forced into unemployment. The severity of the high unemployment rates diminished workers’ ability to pay for basic necessities like food and housing.

A wave of evictions hit the country as millions of jobless workers were forced into the streets by the landlords who had happily profited off their rent payments before the stock

market crash. More than 200,000 evictions occurred in 1930 in New York City alone. Millions more would occur throughout the country over the next decade.

## Workers fight back

Politicians in Washington and around the country refused to act as the stock market crash took an increasing toll on the livelihood of average workers. Instead of using the United States’ vast treasury to feed, clothe and house the millions of unemployed, the capitalist politicians resorted to vain tokenism and extolled “upright” citizens to donate to local charities and show sympathy toward the poor.

The Communist Party USA, whose program then included struggling for a socialist revolution, spearheaded an effort to organize the unemployed and fight back against the injustices incurred during the depression. Communists organized Unemployed Councils and led a vigorous struggle for a moratorium on evictions and direct aid to the dispossessed. The councils called marches and rallies and frequently occupied the offices of government agencies.

Two of the most effective tactics employed by the councils were eviction resistance and rent strikes. Rent strikes required a high degree of organization among tenants to secure widespread participation and to form committees to articulate demands and negotiate with landlords. Seven rent strikes were successfully organized in New York City during the last nine months of 1931 and many more occurred in New York and around the country throughout the decade.

Eviction resistance involved council militants physically moving the furniture of evicted tenants back into their apartments. Crowds would often gather and, under the direction of the Communist-led Unemployed Councils, workers would battle the police dispatched to enforce the eviction. Thousands of organized incidents of eviction resistance occurred throughout the Great Depression.

## The Great Rent Strike War of 1932

One such incident to gain notoriety was the Battle of the Bronx and is detailed in Mark Naison’s “From eviction resistance to rent control: tenant activism in the Great Depression” (in “The Tenant Movement in New York City, 1904-1984”).

Naison points to a quiet section of the Bronx as the starting point for the Great Rent Strike War of 1932. There the Unemployed Councils led rent strikes at three different large apartment buildings in the early part of January.

The majority of tenants in each building withheld their rent and demanded a moratorium on evictions, reductions in rent prices and recognition of the tenants’ committee for bargaining purposes. Landlords responded with widespread evictions, especially targeted toward those leading the strike. Judges quickly approved the eviction notices.

The evictions were met with strong resistance when police and marshals attempted to force tenants from the buildings. Hundreds of protestors fought the police hand-to-hand and with sticks and stones when the officers would attempt to remove furniture from the buildings.

The outnumbered police barely held their line while waiting for reinforcements as the crowds battled them under the direction of Communist Party organizers. Reports from the New York Times indicate the women, who outnumbered the men, were the most militant, were

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Workers World  
55 West 17 Street  
New York, N.Y. 10011  
Phone: (212) 627-2994  
Fax: (212) 675-7869  
E-mail: editor@workers.org  
Web: www.workers.org

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Editor: Deirdre Griswold  
Technical Editor: Lal Roohk

Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell,  
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**National Office**  
55 W. 17 St.,  
New York, NY 10011  
212-627-2994;  
Fax (212) 675-7869  
www.workers.org  
**Atlanta**  
P.O. Box 424,  
Atlanta, GA 30301  
404-627-0185  
atlanta@workers.org  
**Baltimore**  
426 E. 31 St.,  
Baltimore, MD 21218  
410-235-7040  
baltimore@workers.org  
**Boston**  
284 Amory St.,  
Boston, MA 02130  
617-983-3835  
Fax (617) 983-3836  
boston@workers.org  
workersworld.net/boston

**Buffalo, N.Y.**  
367 Delaware Ave.  
Buffalo, NY 14202  
716-566-1115  
buffalo@workers.org  
**Chicago**  
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138  
Chicago, IL 60606  
773-381-5839  
chicago@workers.org  
**Cleveland**  
P.O. Box 5963  
Cleveland, OH 44101  
216-531-4004  
cleveland@workers.org  
**Denver**  
denver@workers.org  
**Detroit**  
5920 Second Ave.,  
Detroit, MI 48202  
313-831-0750  
detroit@workers.org

**Houston**  
P.O. Box 595  
Houston, TX 77001-0595  
713-861-5965  
houston@workers.org  
**Los Angeles**  
5274 West Pico Blvd.,  
Suite 203  
Los Angeles, CA 90019  
323-936-1416  
la@workers.org  
**Milwaukee**  
milwaukee@workers.org  
**Philadelphia**  
P.O. Box 9202,  
Philadelphia, PA 19139  
610-931-2615  
phila@workers.org  
**Raleigh, N.C.**  
raleigh@workers.org

**Richmond, Va.**  
P.O. Box 14602,  
Richmond, VA 23221  
richmond@workers.org  
**Rochester, N.Y.**  
585-436-6458  
rochester@workers.org  
**San Diego, Calif.**  
P.O. Box 33447  
San Diego, CA 92104  
619-692-0355  
**San Francisco**  
2940 16th St., #207  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
415-738-4739  
sf@workers.org  
**Washington, D.C.**  
P.O. Box 57300,  
Washington, DC 20037,  
dc@workers.org





DANBURY, CONN.

# Thousands say ‘No!’ collaboration with ICE

Special to Workers World  
Danbury, Conn.

It’s a basic principle of Marxism: one way that change occurs is when quantity becomes quality. A glass is filled with thousands of drops of water but only one is enough to make it spill over. You can subject people to just so much indignity, but one insult can awaken a rebellion.

That is the situation here in Danbury, Conn., where the city’s latest anti-immigrant measure led to an angry protest estimated at more than three thousand people, almost all from the local Brazilian, Ecuadorian and Mexican communities.

The immigrant residents of this small city have been subjected to every injustice. Police regularly engage in racial profiling, making “driving while brown” the most

common motor vehicle violation. Anti-immigrant groups parade their bigotry in the street and in the local media, receiving constant encouragement from Mayor Mark Boughton, who has made a name for himself with his attacks on immigrant communities. And over it all is the constant threat of raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, who in 2006 entrapped and detained 11 Latin@ day laborers here for the crime of wanting to work.

In the face of this relentless animosity, some immigrant families began moving out of Danbury. Many more felt powerless. Mayor Boughton then took his anti-immigrant policies one step further, announcing last fall that Danbury would authorize the police department to train with ICE agents so officers could work

under ICE supervision, carrying out raids and enforcing federal immigration laws. After several contentious city council meetings, the matter was scheduled for a final vote on Feb. 6.

Previously, Boughton had rejected calls for participation in the so-called ICE ACCESS program, claiming that immigration enforcement was a matter for the federal government. The flip-flop reflected his willingness to cater to the most reactionary and bigoted elements. It also reflected his belief that the immigrant community in Danbury was firmly under control.

In January, Boughton may have begun to see his mistake. The Brazilian and Ecuadorian communities hosted meetings numbering in the hundreds, something that had never happened before. But conventional wisdom said that no more than a few hundred people—both pro- and anti-immigrant—would show up for the city council meeting.

On Feb. 6, Main Street resembled a ghost town: shops were closed in solidarity with the immigrant community and most were papered over with hundreds

of pink flyers opposing the ICE ACCESS proposal. At evening, crowds began to swell around City Hall.

Long before the city council meeting was scheduled to begin the crowd numbered in the hundreds, creating a sense of enthusiasm and militancy as people chanted, waved pink flyers and sang. The numbers continued to grow until more than three thousand people forced the police to shut down the street to accommodate the protest.

Local anti-immigrant forces showed their true colors by turning out less than a half-dozen people and ridiculously declaring that the thousands of protesters were actually “bussed in” from outside the city.

The Feb. 6 demonstration is one of the largest to occur in decades in this town of only 75,000 people. Mayor Boughton has dropped one drop of water too many into the glass and it has begun to overflow.

As the immigrant community begins a campaign to boycott business owners that support the ICE ACCESS ordinance, both sides are wondering where the struggle will emerge next. □

## Recalling the Great Depression’s anti-eviction struggles

Continued from page 2

more likely to battle the police and took the most arrests. In each case, huge numbers of foot and mounted police, marshals and moving men had to be dispatched. The capitalist court system assisted the landlords in attempting to break the strike by approving mass evictions and ordering injunctions against picketing.

The landlords’ counteroffensive won them a temporary reprieve, but by the winter of 1932-1933 the communists had strengthened the Unemployed Councils and a new firestorm of rent strikes spread across New York City and around the country. Organizers called hunger marches and sit-ins at state capitols, town halls, relief bureaus and on Washington.

The strikes, eviction battles and hunger marches proved a stunning success for unemployed workers. Landlords often agreed to significant reductions in rent and to slow the pace of evictions. Agencies such as the Home Relief Bureau were forced by the sit-ins and hunger strikes to dispense funds to the protestors for rent payment.

### Rent control and public housing: a lasting legacy

The unemployed workers’ movement had a lasting impact beyond the temporary victories obtained from landlords and relief agencies. The Unemployed Councils’ militancy forced the national and state governments to enact serious housing reforms, the twin pillars of which were rent control and public housing.

After almost a decade of rent strikes and eviction resistance, Congress passed the United States Housing Act of 1937. The act established a public housing program under the direction of the U.S. Housing Authority to provide loans to local agencies for the construction of low-rent housing. The USHA was the predecessor of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which is supposed to ensure affordable housing today.

Rent controls were another response forced on the government by the militant demands for affordable housing. In 1942 Franklin Roosevelt signed the Emergency Price Control Act into law. The act established a countrywide price control system including limits on the amount of rent landlords could charge for apartments. When the act was allowed to expire in 1947, various states and municipalities around the country stepped in to keep

some form of rent controls in place.

Right-wing attacks on these programs have been consistent throughout the decades. In the 1980s a vociferous conservative assault on progressive welfare programs ensued in the U.S. under the Reagan regime. As a result, many of the progressive elements of the housing legislation were watered down or removed.

Workers today are much more vulnerable to the whims of the market than when the legislation was first passed following a decade of communist-inspired rebellion against capitalism’s housing crisis. The existence of these programs today, even in their more modest and scaled back versions, is a testament to the lasting legacy of the depression-era struggles.

### Housing battles continue today

Clarence Darrow, a progressive trial lawyer famous for defending Eugene Debs and John Scopes, is alleged to have once quipped, “History repeats itself. That is one of the things wrong with history.” This is certainly true as long as capitalism exists as the dominant force in history. Today’s mortgage crisis threatens to nullify the hard work and aspirations of millions of workers.

However, there are signs that it is not just the crisis in capitalism that is repeating itself, but also the struggle against its inhumane tendency to force millions of families into homelessness during economic downturns.

In Massachusetts, a movement to stop evictions began in earnest at the start of the new year. Tenant activists, trade unionists, anti-war organizers and progressive local politicians joined together and successfully faced down a constable sent to enforce the eviction of a mother and children from their home.

In Detroit, the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice, Detroit City Task Force and the United Community Housing Coalition have embarked on a campaign for a moratorium on new home foreclosures. Protestors rallied on Jan. 29 to pressure Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm during her annual State of the State Address.

As the mortgage crisis spreads, so will the movement for a moratorium. If this movement gains the sense of urgency, militancy and mass support that the Unemployed Councils of the 1930s did, then people’s history can repeat itself too. □



DETROIT

## Free speech victory at Cobo Hall



The Michigan Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI) demanded and won their free-speech right to distribute informational leaflets and collect petition signatures at the second “Avoid Foreclosure” forum sponsored by Michigan Attorney General Cox in Detroit’s Cobo Convention Center on Feb. 12.

In December, security officers forced two MECAWI organizers to leave a similar event sponsored by Cox that drew more than 4,000 people. Public officials tried to channel homeowners to individual solutions to the housing crisis and banned information on the campaign for a state emergency declaration and moratorium on foreclosures.

On the evening of Feb. 11, people’s lawyer Jerry Goldberg successfully argued for free speech in federal court. Goldberg asserted that the throngs facing the loss of their homes who would be drawn to the

“Avoid Foreclosures” forum had a right to know that Gov. Jennifer Granholm had the legal power and authority to declare a state of emergency and immediately stop all foreclosures.

With 72,000 foreclosures in Detroit alone, MECAWI organizers had a right to petition and leaflet inside to address the clear emergency. During the 1930s Michigan and 25 other states declared moratoriums on foreclosures just like the one proposed by MECAWI now. Michigan’s moratorium extended five years, unlike the 30-day freeze proposed by “lenders” for some borrowers at the urging of the Bush administration.

Corralled behind a table by the unhappy Cobo Hall officials, MECAWI organizers found the most common response to the moratorium petition was, “Where do I sign?”

—Report and photo by Cheryl LaBash



# First rumblings of resistance at Chrysler

By Martha Grevatt

Those who collect oxymorons can add a new one to their list: job security.

Any doubters can ask a Chrysler worker. Last week four assembly plants closed abruptly over a parts shortage, caused by a dispute with bankrupt parts supplier Plastech that threatened to shut every plant of the corporation. The company typically treated the parts shortage as a situation beyond its control, yet would there be parts shortages if Chrysler—which outsources more parts than either Ford or General Motors—would let UAW members do the work in house?

In fact this development was the latest of the conflicts between automakers and suppliers over the price of commodities, a tug-of-war in which workers are treated as mere strands on a fraying rope. While production resumed two days later, the situation underscored the precariousness of a Chrysler worker's well-being.

The latest threat to their livelihoods, “a plan to right-size”—read shrink—“ts product line and dealership network”—and the workforce—is called “Project Genesis.” It follows earlier-announced cuts of 25,000 U.S. and Canadian jobs. While thousands of Chrysler workers will be seduced, with large sums of money, to quit or retire, unemployment looms on the horizon for thousands more.

*Martha Grevatt conducted this interview with Rosendo Delgado, a permanently laid-off Chrysler designer and Detroit immigrant-rights activist.*

**Martha Grevatt:** What was the mood of the rank and file after the announcement?

**Rosendo Delgado:** Oh my goodness, the mood of the workers was pretty devastating, I should say very depressed. Prior to Christmas this was going on, and the union had told them, “You are in violation of the labor contract that we just signed in October.” I imagine that management got tough and decided to do it after Christmas. Unfortunately it came at a time when it is difficult to move around and get a job.

Most people already kind of knew about this but there was anger through e-mails that the union was not really telling us anything as to what was coming. As soon as they know that there's going to be some problem, they should let us know ahead of time, because an hour before you're laid off, that is nothing.

**MG:** Did your local vote for contract?

**RD:** Yes. Primarily because the contract stated that there would be no layoffs. In spite of that management is violating a labor contract, so that's something that needs to be addressed by the union

**MG:** Is there a feeling of betrayal?

**RD:** You bet. A lot of these people were pretty upset, especially before Christmas. A lot of these people were saying that our department head, that guy, better not be coming through

Chrysler has set an ugly precedent with its treatment of the 119 “highly specialized surfacing designers” who were pink-slipped Jan. 31. That Thursday afternoon they were permanently laid off, and given one hour to pack up their things and leave. Members of UAW Local 412, these skilled designers represent over 20 percent of their bargaining unit.

Although Chrysler workers have grown accustomed to a steady decline in numbers, layoffs categorized as “permanent” come as a shock. Though drastic, cuts under the past few contracts had been achieved through attrition, i.e., not filling vacancies when workers die, quit or retire.

By imposing permanent layoffs that are not specifically “volume [sales] related,” Chrysler and the parent company Cerberus are flagrantly disregarding the contract with the UAW. That contract, almost rejected last October, passed by a few thousand votes on the promise of job security.

The aggressive moves on the part of the number three U.S. automaker reveal the impact and depth of the banking crisis. The short-lived euphoria over the sale of Chrysler has dissipated. The underwriters—the banks that financed the buyout with billion-dollar loans to Cerberus—are now desperately seeking investors to help take the debt off their backs.

With billions of dollars invested in both real estate and finance—including a 51 percent stake in the financial

here wishing us a Merry Christmas. I mean, if this guy came through there he would be risking verbal abuse.

**MG:** Why do you think the company would get rid of such highly skilled employees?

**RD:** Primarily, it's so simple. They want to reduce the head count of people who are earning good money. They want to get rid of the higher paid employees and hire people at a lower wage. And also of course, if they could do it, they would just bust the union.

In our very own unit we have something like 400 body designers, and the company has been fighting with the union, more than five years from what I understand. [The union says] that these body designers must be part of the union membership. They are doing the work that we typically do, and yet they are contracted. Also there were a lot, 119 of us that were laid off, but yet they have a lot of design people from the suppliers in house, we have a list of over 250, doing the work that we are supposed to be doing. And they give us, “The market is bad, we don't have enough work, we have to lay you off.”

**MG:** Your local president has stated, “It's like war against the union, and we're going to go back to war against them.” Any comments?

**RD:** Well, I think the union is going to fight back. How much or how much effort they're going to put into it, this is what's the key issue.

**MG:** Can we organize a fight?

**RD:** Oh, I think it can be organized, because this is only the beginning.

**MG:** You are also involved in the immigrant-rights movement. Do you

arm of General Motors—Cerberus itself has taken a big hit from the sub-prime mortgage/credit crunch. Now that the mortgage meltdown is turning into a global capitalist economic crisis, how will Chrysler's restructuring—the destroying of more than 25,000 jobs—be financed? The bosses only know one solution to their quandary, and that is to further reduce the price of labor power with additional restructuring.

With its ranks so decimated, and with those most affected already out on the street, the UAW is in a highly defensive position. Workers are being stripped away from where they have the most leverage: at the point of production. Nevertheless, history shows—and UAW history is the rule not the exception—that workers will fight back. The question is not if but when.

Local 412 President Jeff Hagler has vowed to fight these layoffs. “It's like war against the union, and we're going to go back to war against them,” Hagler stated.

Right now the “war” is taking the form of a grievance. This is a necessary step, but it means essentially arguing the workers' case in front of the very bosses who have ordered the layoffs in the first place. However, if the rank-and-file foot soldiers are mobilized to take the war to a higher level, the company's absolutely ruthless agenda can be pushed back.

*E-mail: mgrevatt@workers.org*

see a connection between this struggle and the struggle of autoworkers to keep their jobs?

**RD:** Oh yes, absolutely. Primarily because what we are experiencing here, it's the effects of the free trade agreements that make it so easy for corporations to be irresponsible and abusive and in a lot of cases downright criminal. What is happening here today I call the economic tsunami, and what we are feeling here today has already been felt in other parts of the world.

NAFTA hit Mexico some 12 or 15 years ago. A lot of the industries were economically devastated. In [the past] three years two to three million Mexicans have left Mexico and emigrated to the United States, and primarily from the rural areas because the agribusiness companies have controlled the food production in Mexico. They put a lot of the small farmers out of work. These farmers have nowhere else to go except wherever they can find a job.

It's really up to us workers to make our peers understand that the corporations are going to do everything they can in order to make a buck, and a lot of the workers are going to be brainwashed to say it's the Mexicans or it's the Filipinos who are coming over here and taking our jobs. So I think it is going to be an uphill battle to make people understand that the enemy is not a fellow worker. The enemies are the greedy executives in the board room.

I think that is good aspect of this whole entire mess. I should say it's a good opportunity. □

## ON THE PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

### End in sight for writers' strike

After three long months on strike, the Writers Guild of America, East and West, announced a three-year contract on Feb. 9 that won almost all the payment terms they wanted for work shown on new electronic media. If the writers vote to end the strike before they ratify the contract, which will take several weeks, they will be at their computers on Feb. 13.

One of the precedent-setting new terms is that in the third year of the contract writers will be paid two percent of the distributors' gross revenue rather than a fixed residual of \$1,300 for Web-streamed television shows. Another major gain is that residuals for electronic downloads of movies and television will be calculated at nearly double the rate currently paid for DVDs, which will also be based on a percentage of the distributors' revenue. The only concerns raised by writers at a membership meeting in Hollywood on Feb. 9 were 17- and 24-day windows for free content reuse on the Internet and relatively low fees for cable syndication. (unitedhollywood.com)

This strike proved, yet again, that when the bosses refuse to meet the workers' just demands, the most powerful way they can show their strength is by withholding their labor power. Another entertainment industry contract is set to expire on June 30—that of the 120,000-member Screen Actors Guild. Will the actors benefit from the writers' contract, or will they too be forced to strike? Stay tuned.

### Day laborers sue Chicago

On Dec. 5, two day laborers, assisted by the Chicago Committee for the Right to Work and the Latino Union of Chicago, filed a federal lawsuit against the city of Chicago. They charged city police with systematically harassing and falsely arresting workers who gather on street corners in search of work. The workers, who are predominantly immigrants from Latin America, allege wrongful detention, violation of First Amendment rights, conspiracy to violate civil rights and malicious prosecution. In These Times reported in January that 150 such cases have been thrown out.

According to a 2006 report by UCLA's Center for the Study of Urban Poverty, there are approximately 117,000 day laborers in the U.S., with about 800 in Chicago. The study showed that day laborers in the Midwest suffer the highest level of police abuse. Of the workers surveyed, 34 percent reported that police forced them to leave the area where they sought work, 27 percent had their immigration status checked, and 24 percent were photographed or videotaped. In one outrageous sting operation, undercover Chicago cops posing as contractors lured workers to a Home Depot to discuss employment terms and then arrested them for criminal trespass!

### Grocery workers win contracts

Grocery workers represented by Food and Commercial Workers Local 555 in Eugene, Ore., signed a new contract in January with decent health care coverage and raises after a year of resisting the bosses' demands for reduced benefits and bonuses instead of raises. Victories like this have been taking place all over the country thanks to workers' strength and community solidarity. For instance, in November 2007, UFCW reported that 25,000 grocery workers at Save Mart (Lucky in the Bay Area), Raley's and Bel Air Markets in Northern California won across-the-board raises, improved benefits and guarantees of the same contract expiration date for all locals. After threatening to strike, Local 1099 signed a contract providing affordable health care, secure retirement and wage increases for 11,000 Kroger workers in southwestern Ohio, northern Kentucky and southeastern Indiana. Meanwhile other locals from Memphis to Vancouver are still struggling for decent contracts.

Continued on page 5



At Exeter Assembly

Anti-war activist argues for socialism

By Najja Kossally  
Exeter, N.H.

Sara Flounders, co-director of the International Action Center, delivered a 30-minute assembly program on Feb. 8 to the 1,000-person student body of Phillips Exeter Academy, a prominent private high school in New Hampshire. Her talk was divided into four sections: why capitalism requires war and inequality; why capitalism requires racism; the basics of socialism; and the choices that we make that impact society.

Assembly programs are held three times a week at Phillips Exeter and, judging by the buzz Flounders’ talk created on campus, this was the most notable assembly of the year.

At one point during the assembly, Sara Flounders sparked giggles throughout the crowd when she pointed out how people refuse to treat socialism as they’d treat any other area of life, refuse to even “allow room for trial and error.” She asked the

crowd if we’d say the same things about scientific pursuits as we do about socialism: “The Wright Brothers. If god wanted us to fly he would have given us wings. It’s a good idea but an ideal that will never work. Would you say that about electricity ... lightning kills? If we were supposed to have light then night wouldn’t be dark.”

On a less humorous note Flounders also mentioned the \$660 billion U.S. military budget, compared to the \$40 billion required to end poverty in developing nations. Her exposure of U.S. foreign policy raised a few eyebrows and murmurs throughout the crowd. Keep in mind the Phillips Exeter Academy has a \$1 billion endowment—that’s over \$1 million per student—and that Duponts and Rockefellers attend Exeter, as did former National Security Adviser John Negroponte’s son last year. But now one-third students of the students get financial aid, about 20 percent are Asian and 5-10 percent Black.

After the assembly, Flounders con-

tinued the discussion in the dining hall with a group of about 10 students. A few students spent a good portion of this smaller discussion making hostile right-wing remarks; however, when Flounders invited the only two females to speak, one of them made the most productive remark. “I think you can see even from this table the ill effects of a still predominantly patriarchal society,” she said, poking fun at the male belligerence around the table.

The student went on to ask Flounders how she maintained her revolutionary enthusiasm, to which Flounders responded that she was motivated by the movements of the 1960s and the gains that have been made from those struggles. Flounders also spoke to three classrooms on different subjects.

The student response to Sara Flounders was mixed on class lines and political lines. The arguments of detractors were the same typical ones often heard during debates at Exeter: socialism won’t work

because of human nature. For them, Flounders’ socialist analysis of society was too “simplistic” and “idealistic.” The first argument assumes that people are innately and fundamentally selfish, always have been and always will be, and do not have a capacity to cooperate well enough to establish equality.

As for the second argument, it might appear to be a refutation of ideas in general. Most people who argue it also subscribe to Adam Smith’s peculiar idea that by rapacious and vicious pursuit of their own self-interests, capitalists benefit all of society. At a rich school like Exeter, these stale arguments are inevitably exhaled and inhaled, unaltered, in all seriousness.

More important are the students who said that Flounder’s assembly was the best of the year, the students who were energized and encouraged to action by her speech. That IAC co-director Sara Flounders managed to rile up the whole campus and spark heated debates attests to the success of her assembly speech. □

LAKE COUNTY, CALIF.

Pomo Indians demand respect

By Terri Kay  
Kelseyville, Calif.

About 40 people attended an open meeting Feb. 10 called by Pomo Indians in Lakeport, Calif., to educate the non-Native population about the bloody history of slavery and massacres which were carried out against the Pomo and other tribes by the white settlers.

The Pomos were reacting to a racist campaign mounted in the Kelseyville, Calif., school district to overturn the renaming of the Kelseyville High School mascot from the Indians to the Knights. Even though the Pomos had invited them to come and express their point of view, none of the racists showed at the meeting.

The name change happened only a couple of years ago at the instigation of Clayton Duncan, a local Pomo. He was able to win the support of a number of people, and the school board unanimously changed the mascot name.

Since then, there has been a school board election, with the racists running candidates to get the change overturned. There have also been a number of nasty attacks against Duncan in letters to the editor of the local Record Bee newspaper. He has received a large amount of support, in letters, as well.

A very moving, locally produced documentary was shown at the Feb. 10 meeting, entitled “Hinthel Ganula.” This movie documented the struggles for survival of the Pomo people in Northern California, focusing on what is now Lake County. Duncan’s great-grandmother was one of the lone survivors of a particularly heinous event, the “Bloody Island Massacre.” As a child she hid in the shallow waters

of the lake, breathing through the tulles, still clutched by her dead mother, as she watched white soldiers murder every man, woman, and child on the island. In the discussion that followed the movie, support was strong to push back this attempt to overturn the righteous name change.

One of the original school board members who had voted to get rid of the Indian mascot name was in attendance. He and

two others of the original five had been re-elected to the board. A school board meeting on Feb. 19 has this issue on the agenda.

The Pomos are also mounting a campaign to change the name of the town of Kelseyville, which is named after one of the racist settlers who was responsible for the enslavement, starvation and murder of many Pomos. □

In the heart of Little Havana!

Anti-Posada demonstrators rally

By Michael Martinez  
Miami

It was a bright and sunny day Feb. 9 in Little Havana. The weather was just right for a walk over to enjoy a cafesito or a colada at a well-known right-wing Cuban hang-out, the Versailles Restaurant. But things weren’t business as usual that morning.

For those who said it could not be done, well it has been done!

A group of Miami’s local anti-war activ-

ists along with Code Pink women against the war rallied for two-and-a-half hours out in front of the Versailles on Little Havana’s Eighth Street. They rallied to defend free speech in response to the violent attack carried out against Code Pink when they first attempted to hand out informational postcards on anti-Cuba terrorist, Luis Posada Carriles, in January.

In front of the Versailles, the anti-Cuba gang could only muster up about 100 relics of their infamous past. They had announced to the press and Miami Police

Department that 800 would be there. Held behind police barriers, they were frustrated in their efforts to disrupt the anti-Posada action.

The anti-Posada forces chanted pro-Cuba slogans, sang and danced in Little Havana. This was an important defeat for Miami’s anti-Cuba gang. The only thing that they could accomplish was to raise their blood pressure.

The Feb. 9 action in Little Havana created important opportunities and challenges for the progressive movement in Miami. The fact that the pro-fascist forces were only able to mobilize a little under a hundred people in the heart of Little Havana and that police were unable to openly collaborate with the rightists, reflects a shift in the relationship of forces in the Cuban exile community. It meant progressive forces were able to demonstrate on those streets.

Today there is an opportunity to end the climate of fear and intimidation that has stifled political debate in Miami for far too long. The issue will be whether the progressive forces in the Cuban community have the maturity and seriousness to take advantage of this new opportunity to help shape the national debate on the U.S.’s foreign policy towards Cuba, Venezuela and movements for social justice in Latin America and the Caribbean. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

S.F. Labor Council backs Gulf Coast housing act

On Jan. 15, the San Francisco Labor Council passed a unanimous resolution supporting the Gulf Coast Housing Recovery Act, pending in the Senate (S. 1668), “which calls for one-for-one affordable replacement of any public housing units demolished, and honors the right of return of New Orleans residents displaced by the floods of Katrina and Rita.” The resolution urged the California Labor Federation and the AFL-CIO to get behind the bill. □





# BEHIND THE ATTACK ON HIP HOP

By Larry Hales

**Hip-hop is still under attack.** Popular media outlets have forgiven Don Imus’ comments; the sexist and racist radio personality has been given another position on another station to pollute the airwaves. But hip-hop is still heavily scrutinized and made the scapegoat for the sexism, racism and homophobia rampant in the U.S.

Whatever contradictions exist in rap music or any of the other elements of hip-hop, the culture is neither the greatest purveyor of the contradictions nor the initiator. It is merely subject to infiltration from the culture that comes with capitalist society.

Any student of the evolution of Black music knows that in the beginning, hip-hop was not just party music, but social commentary. The phenomenon of what was then known as a counterculture—partly because hip-hop in its early days was underground—was a response to the conditions imposed upon Black and Puerto Rican youth in New York and across the country in inner city areas in the late 1970s and 1980s. Those conditions included white flight from city areas, the beginning of deindustrialization and the decline of the great social movements of the 1960s and 1970s as a result of the boom and bust cycle of capitalism.

If the perpetuation of capital requires greater and greater exploitation, especially of oppressed nationalities, then it is natural for countercultures of the

exploited—the oppressed and workers—in bourgeois or capitalist society to exist. The wellspring, in this period, of the countercultures is the desire for freedom from exploitation.

### Culture and modes of production

A dialectical materialist conception of history is essential to understanding the development of culture—especially artistic output—in response to productive modes and more so when coming to the defense of an art form of an oppressed nationality in “the prison house of nations,” the United States.

Culture is all encompassing. The thoughts, ideas, actions, language, arts—every human endeavor or expression is connected to a society’s culture. It is not something static, but evolves and is intimately bound to the real and material world. Miles Davis perhaps put it best when he said, “Music is always changing. It changes because of the times and the technology that’s available.”

Just as everything in nature goes through constant change, the thoughts and actions of human beings change to reflect the constantly changing world and how human beings interact with that reality.

That interaction, the manipulation of nature for subsistence, is how the society is organized. Karl Marx wrote, “By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life.” Not every society developed at the same pace nor went through exactly the same stages in the same way,

but how the needs of the society are met and the relation of the producers of the needs to the things produced is indeed what society is organized around. And, it is from production that human nature is derived, so it too is not a static thing.

When Marx said capital came into the world “dripping from head to toe from every pore with blood and dirt,” bringing with it private property and the subjugation of women, children, gender expression and sexual identity necessary for the patriarchal system to perpetuate the bequeathing of capital, he was speaking of the necessity of the capitalist class to exploit the masses for profit.

The capitalist mode of production brings with it a culture, rooted in the objective demands of a system based on deriving profit.

Under bourgeois capitalist society pop culture is a manufactured thing, a commodity meant to pander to the mores and ideals of the capitalist ruling class, all while making a profit. As Marx said, “The prevailing ideas of every society are the ideas of the ruling class.” So, whenever someone lodges a complaint against backwardness that may appear in a form of artistic expression, then the complaint is against the culture that is part of the capitalist mode of production.

Pop or mass culture, the artistic expression of it, can be a gauge of the willingness of the masses to struggle, expressions of the conditions the masses are faced with, or both at the same time. The same goes for the culture of the oppressed—those workers who face added discrimination, repression and hardship because of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, so-called

legal status and/or disability.

However, the culture of the oppressed not only faces infiltration from the ideals of the ruling class, but also from the dominant layer of society. In the U.S. that layer is white. Though there exists the oppression of white women and of white lesbian, gay, bi and trans people, because of the history of genocide, land theft and slavery—part of “the primitive accumulation of capital” denoted by Marx—race is always a factor. The historical development of the U.S. and the world has deemed that the lens of race is always firmly fitted.

So, in the climate that has risen since the firing of Don Imus over his racist, sexist remarks regarding a women’s basketball team where most of the players were Black, it is important to defend the musical form that is being criticized.

Racism, sexism, homophobia and all oppressions will begin to disappear with the destruction of capitalist society. These things are ultimately weapons to keep workers apart and fighting against one another. They are always present under capitalism; the intensity of the usage of them comes and goes with crisis and struggle.

The attack on hip-hop culture is a racist attack on a powerful form of expression born from struggle and co-opted for profit and in an attempt to dull its message. It is important that the root cause be identified and workers not get caught up in the attacks.

Don Imus is not a victim of hip-hop, nor was he imitating it. He is a racist and sexist taking the line of the capitalist ruling class. □



## Black activists call ‘state of emergency summit’

By Sharon Danann  
Cleveland

A diverse array of organizations and individuals attended a conference at Cleveland State University Feb. 1 and 2 to discuss the urgent problems facing the Black community in Cleveland and other cities. The conference was called by the Cleveland Link of the New Black Panther Party for Self Defense and co-sponsored by Black Lawyers for Justice and Cleveland State University Black Studies Program.

The program opened with a stirring rendition of the Black national anthem “Lift Every Voice and Sing” in four-part harmony. That was followed by youth performances from Marian Sterling Elementary School Drill Team and a pledge of allegiance to the red, black and green flag and drumming by the youth group, the Golden Ciphers.

In welcoming the participants, Dr. Michael Williams of the Black Studies Program spoke of needing to pay attention to the Black community’s “daily war report,” which consists of such statistics as the people who go to prison, the lack of health care, the unemployment, the suicides, the depression and the alcoholism. He spoke of his struggles to gain understanding within CSU, and declared, “I am not a dark skinned white person.” Of the hundreds of CSU faculty members and

administrators, only 32 faculty members are Black and only five administrators are Black. When he informed the audience that the budget for the Black Studies Program was a mere \$26,000, there was an audible gasp. He called for community support for the program.

The keynote speaker on Feb. 1 was Saadiqah Amatullah Hasan, whose husband, Siddique Abdullah Hasan, is one of the Lucasville 5, a political prisoner on Ohio’s death row who acted as a negotia-

tor to bring the 1993 prison uprising in Lucasville, Ohio, to an end. The prosecution did not have real evidence against Hasan to support the capital charges. So, according to Ms. Hasan, “They used the only thing they had. They used lying jailhouse snitch testimony,” even though it conflicted with a forensic coroner. “It is about being a Muslim in a non-Muslim society,” she stated.

Chairman of the Cleveland New Black Panther Party Abdul Qahhar spoke with passion about the days of torment and horrible indignity forced upon Megan Williams of West Virginia. “At least they killed Emmett Till,” he said. “She died over and over for days.” He described himself as a revolutionary pan-Africanist, because “I am for the liberation of our people wherever they are on the planet.” He stated that he has always been for a united front. “To be a revolutionary, you have to be a lover, a lover of the people.”

Regarding the call for the State of Emergency, he stated, “We are here to come up with solutions, here to build a community government, government that belongs to the people, a People’s Community Congress. Each ward will have a leader that will be accountable to the congress.” He invited all the organizations represented at the conference and more to participate in this congress.

On Feb. 2, a panel of speakers addressed a variety of topics. Ori Muhammad of the Millions More Movement and Roland Muhammad of the Nation of Islam spoke to the issue of Economic Genocide in the Black Community.

On the topic of political prisoners, Yahya Abdus Sabur reported from the Imam Jamil Al-Amim (the former H. Rap Brown) Defense Committee, and Sister Amirah of the New Black Panther Party

reported on two political prisoners on Missouri’s death row. Sister Fajr of the Midwest Team of Political Awareness of the New Black Panther Party is reaching audiences through hip hop and poetry as they go from city to city keeping people informed about the political prisoners still behind bars.

On the topic of the prison industrial complex, Ms. Hasan pointed out that prisons are a \$35 billion, money-making business. As raw material for this business, she said, “Black men are being manufactured and processed.” She compared the prison system to the drug companies “which treat you without really curing you, otherwise they would go bankrupt.” So prison is not about rehabilitation. “The prison-industrial complex is not going to change if Obama is elected,” she stated. □



From left, Abdul Qahhar, Dr. Michael Williams, Abdul Kareen Muhammad.  
WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR



GRAPHIC BY SAHU BARRON



# How a workers’ party related to Black liberation struggle

*Based on part of a talk that WWP secretariat member Larry Holmes made in Detroit on Feb. 9 at a meeting of the local Workers World Party branch on Black History Month.*

**THIS IS A SPECIAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH,** because not only is it Black History Month, it is also the tenth anniversary of the passing of Sam Marcy. There’s a lot that one could say about the connection between those two things.

Sam Marcy’s founding of Workers World Party and the early years of our party are completely intertwined with the Black liberation struggle in ways that I think only a number of people in the older generations appreciate. We will need to find a way to let younger generations know about this—that is our job.

What I mean by that is that Workers World Party is 50 years old, that is, we will be 50 years old at the beginning of next year. The party was founded in early 1959. What was 1959 besides a year when the U.S. was coming out of McCarthyism and in the pre-Vietnam War phase?

It was also the early days of the next phase of the Black struggle—the two wings of the Black struggle. The civil rights movement on the one hand, identified with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the NAACP and the march on Washington; and the Black liberation movement on the other hand, which didn’t begin with Malcolm X and the Panthers and Fred Hampton, but began with people like Mae Mallory and Rob Williams and others throughout the South and the Midwest who began defending themselves against racists with weapons, whether it was in Louisiana or Milwaukee.

And there became a need—whether symbolic or more substantive than symbolic—for some sector of the movement that was trying to represent the working class to come to the defense of people like Mae Mallory and Rob Williams.

Yes, this sector would say to those heroes, you have the right to defend yourselves with weapons against the Klan, against the police, against White Citizens Councils, against terrorists and fascists. Moreover those of us who know better, be we Black, white or whatever, if we understand the needs of class solidarity we will come and help you. We will stand with you.

If that is not possible, we will send you resources, we will get you a lawyer, we will rally support behind you, and at least, if it is the only thing we can do, we

will tell people who have no other way of knowing that this is what is happening and this is the situation that you face.

The Black movement, both wings, evolved rapidly during the 1960s. Our role and our support behind all of the wings were very important to us. Workers World Party was a very small group at the time. We were going all over the country setting up defense committees, setting up public relations operations, press committees, getting lawyers, fundraising for all the Black warriors who were under the gun. Some were known, some less well known, some not known at all.

As the movement took on wind and more young people got involved, by the early 1960s Malcolm X had become known nationally.

Malcolm X was the bridge between the earlier Black nationalists, the Nation of Islam going back to Marcus Garvey and the new generation that was to be represented by the Black Panther Party and by George Jackson and Angela Davis and the struggles inside the prisons.

We were so busy as a party supporting Black liberation and supporting the program of the revolutionaries, even if it went so far as to demand separation, which we believe was the right of the Black nation or some sector of the Black nation if they thought it was part of the answer to their liberation.

We actually held back building the party. We didn’t put all our effort into just recruiting people to the party and having bigger party meetings and constituting ourselves as a growing entity. It seemed at the time that the thing to do was to be with the Black struggle.

It is important, perhaps the most important thing for us to remember and share is that Workers World Party’s support for the Black liberation movement was not based on idealism or romanticism. We weren’t caught up in the moment. We weren’t just excited about it. Oh, yes, it was exciting, but it was also dangerous and it was costly. Our support was based on class solidarity.

We understood that there could be no working-class progress in this country unless some sector of our class, those who understood, those who had the level of consciousness and courage, were able to extend the hand of solidarity to the Black

liberation movement. We had to do this no matter what the odds, no matter who was with us and who wasn’t with us.

We were building the foundation for what would come. Part of what would come would be the flourishing of WWP.

You really can’t take the formation of Workers World Party, you can’t understand, you can’t locate the formation of Workers World Party outside of its relationship with the Black liberation struggle. Those two things have been and will be intertwined and connected.

It is unlikely that I would be standing before you if it were not for the work that the party did long before I came along. Because in so many ways and for so many other comrades, the work that they did in those critical years in the 1960s supporting the Black Liberation movement paved the way for people like me to come and say, “This is a place where I feel comfortable. This is a place where I have no contradictions. This is a place where I don’t have to pretend that I am this or that. We are one.”

Because of our work, of all the parties on the left we have had for half a century the closest relationships with the Black liberation movement.

We have been welcome. They have been welcome. We talk with everybody, all of the leaders, and break bread with them. We write about them in our paper. In this week’s paper you’ll see a picture of Monica Moorehead at one of the meetings held by the December 12th Movement, a nationalist organization in the New York City area that has a long history of struggle. D12 organized a book signing for the book that Monica Moorehead made contributions to and organized, called “Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle.”

That is just a sign of the relationship. We are the only multinational party present when many of the Black forces hold their rallies and their meetings—they invite us to participate. You won’t see other political tendencies there, unless it is just selling their newspaper or trying to explain why the Black people at the meeting should be following their leadership. But we will be on the platform and we will be there in solidarity.

Because we always realize that to build a party in this country without having a close relationship with the Black liberation movement, whatever its character was at the time, is simply not possible.

Unfortunately the Black liberation movement is in a defensive period, but that is because of the worldwide reaction. Still, there is no way to build a revolutionary working-class party without being a part of or without having a connection to that movement.

I believe Comrade Sam Marcy’s view and strategy in relationship to the Black movement is based on his understanding of what we call the national question applied to the Black question. But there is something more fundamental in it, con-

sistent with it, but more fundamental.

You can see it in Sam Marcy’s view of the world when he was inside another party and he was arguing for a more revolutionary line on the world view.

What am I talking about? We go back to the early 1950s—Trotskyists, Stalinists, the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party and other formations were there—it was before the Maoist organizations that arose 10 years later more or less.

There was the Chinese revolution and shortly after that the Korean War, which was imperialism’s effort not only to overturn socialism in North Korea but also to roll back the Chinese Revolution.

The debate among some leftists in this country in relation to the Chinese Revolution was twofold. Some said it was not really a communist revolution and they didn’t really know what it was, so why should they get all involved in it. Others called it Stalinist, considering that is a mark against it, and asked why they would want to associate their party with that kind of revolution.

Sam said they were underestimating the social scope of the social revolution in China, that time would show this to be true. Then, are you going to disassociate yourself from a revolutionary or progressive process involving such a big slice of humanity because you think they follow some leadership you don’t agree with? Is that your criteria?

Shouldn’t you be thinking about the bigger question? What does this mean for the world?

What Sam Marcy was doing, and this was extraordinary on his part, particularly in the United States, Marcy was saying that the differences within the communist movement, both old and new differences, differences based on the Trotsky-Stalin

split, on Lenin, however you characterize these differences and try to explain them, at some point it has gotten confusing and so open to interpretation that people who were not part of those struggles don’t know who to believe.

But if you are going to base yourself on those old differences and use them as an excuse not to be in solidarity with millions and billions of people struggling to liberate themselves from colonialism and imperialism, then what use are you? What good are you? Don’t we have to have a bigger view? Step back. We are in a worldwide struggle—who is generally on our side and who is generally on the other side?

It is not that the differences, old differences and new differences, are insignificant—some of them may be very significant. Some of them may be decisive.

But don’t throw the baby out with the bath water. Let’s step back and look at our class on a global scale. Who is with us and who is against us? It is within that context that you can understand Marcy’s view of the Black liberation struggle.

What you have to do is step back and ask who is with us on a world scale against our enemy—world imperialism led by the United States—and relate to each other on that basis. If you do that your chances of getting it right are about 90 percent. □



Mae Mallory-1961  
PHOTO: JOHN HERMAN WILLIAMS

## MARXISM, REPARATIONS & THE BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE

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# Gulf of Tonkin incident—1964

*Workers World has begun its 50th year of publication. Throughout the year, we intend to share with our readers some of the paper's content over the past half century. On Aug. 2 and 4, 1964, the Pentagon claimed that small Vietnamese boats had fired on the USS Maddox and another destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin, off the coast of Vietnam. Lyndon Johnson used this alleged attack as pretext for ramming a resolution through Congress giving him the power and funds to wage war on Vietnam. Johnson's own papers later revealed it was a fraud, and then Defense Secretary Robert McNamara admitted in the film "Fog of War" that the whole incident had been phony. Only two of the 100 senators voted against the resolution, Wayne Morse of Oregon and Ernest Gruening of Alaska. The other 98 went along with the ruling-class war drive, as did the entire corporate media. Workers World Party's youth organization, Youth Against War and Fascism (YAWF), immediately challenged the Tonkin fraud and the war from the beginning. The articles published below on the Tonkin events and the protests were first published in the Aug. 13 and Aug. 27, 1964 issues of Workers World.*

Workers World  
Aug. 13, 1964

## U.S. pushing for wider war in Asia; Now seeks to provoke China

**Last Week's Bombing of N. Vietnam Has Failed to Terrorize Asian Masses; It Only Steals Them!**

The bankers, bosses, generals and admirals finally made the move they have been threatening for months; a massive bombing assault on North Vietnam.

All progressive humanity was shocked by the cynical attack—but it was not surprised.

Back on February 23, the Chicago Daily News reported from Vietnam that there was a "plan to carry the war to Communist North Vietnam" and revealed some of the details of U.S. involvement. Back on February 24, Joseph Alsop said in the New York Herald Tribune that "Air attacks on North Vietnam's industrial centers . . . are now being weighed." And Stewart Alsop quoted a high U.S. official in the February 22 Saturday Evening Post as having said: "If the Chinese intervene (after the U.S. bombs North Vietnam—ed.), we would have the heaven-sent opportunity to hit certain targets in China."

After Admiral Felt, retiring General Harkins and top brass-hat Defense Secretary McNamara had sounded off to the same effect, Johnson himself began issuing "warnings"—first in a speech at San Francisco on June 26 and then in Minneapolis on June 28. He "wouldn't hesitate to risk war to preserve peace," he said in relation to North Vietnam.

Considering that the Vietnam liberation forces were only four miles from Saigon just two weeks ago, it wasn't surprising that Johnson should choose to "preserve peace" with his big bombing raid on August 4.

(That's one thing that makes it so



Anti-war protest in Times Square, New York, Aug. 8, 1964. In front of picture, arms folded, is Dorothy Ballan, a founder and leader of Workers World Party.

obvious that the "PT Boat attack" was a phony. Just on the verge of winning in South Vietnam, the Liberation Forces and North Vietnam needed a new war with the United States like they needed the proverbial hole in the head!)

### Imperialists Have Failed!

North Vietnam sustained heavy material losses in the brutal attack of August 4.

But the imperialists failed in their objective, which was either to provoke a major war or demoralize the revolution.

On the contrary, the bombings have galvanized the Southeast Asian masses into more opposition than ever. They have alerted the defenses of China and other countries who may be attacked. They have solidified the alliance between North Vietnam and China. And they have further weakened the corrupt regime of puppet-dictator Khanh, who, already on the skids, has declared martial law to conceal the fact that nobody supports him.

Imperialism is tough and terrible, but it is dying. And the masses are fighting for a system that is just being born—and they are unconquerable.

## Times Square rally against Viet War; Police break it up!

By L. Richie

NEW YORK, August 8—Mounted police today charged into a crowd assembled in Times Square to protest the U.S. war in Vietnam. Hundreds of onlookers were stunned by the fascist thoroughness of the cops. At least one person was trampled and others were pummeled.

The right of freedom of speech was also trampled and 17 were arrested. But leaders later called for another demonstration in the same place next Saturday.

Vincent Copeland, Editor of Workers World, was the first to be grabbed and arrested by police as he defiantly continued his speech attacking the U.S. assault on Northern Vietnam after police had scattered spectators with their charge.

The meeting was sponsored by the May 2nd Committee and Youth Against War and Fascism.

The meeting began at 4:00 P.M. Saturday just north of crowded Times Square at Broadway and 47th Street in a large street island called Duffy Square. The listeners gathered in front of a statue there while speakers mounted the base of the statue.

Levi Laub, an official of May 2 Committee, opened the meeting and was followed by Philip Luce, acting chairman of the May 2nd Committee. A squad of police began to move in as Luce introduced Vincent Copeland of Workers World. Copeland welcomed all to the protest against the U.S. action in Viet Nam and said, "The threat of Goldwater's itchy trigger finger has now been replaced by the bloody hand of Johnson."

The squad of cops then moved in and surrounded the speaker and others at the base of the statue.

"Let him speak; let him speak!" the crowd began to chant. The chant continued until Luce raised his hand for silence and announced that, "The police say they are not going to allow us to speak."

At this point the mounted police charged into the audience. The horsed cops drove the people to the far ends of the square and into the street. One man fell under the horses' hooves and the police rider trampled him. Some of the scattered spectators climbed on raised stone areas to escape the horses. Many still held up signs demanding that U.S. troops be withdrawn from Vietnam.

At this point Copeland had gotten an electronic megaphone and he resumed his speech as thousands of spectators stopped on the sidewalks to view the action. "Look at the fascist cops—is this what we're supposed to be fighting for in Vietnam?" he said.

Copeland continued speaking until two cops grabbed him and jerked him to a waiting car.

A large group of youthful onlookers then marched over to the police station on West 47th Street, where the arrested people were being held, shouting and chanting slogans of freedom for the prisoners and peace in Vietnam.

Among others arrested were Key Martin of Youth Against War and Fascism, Levi Laub of Progressive Labor, and Fred Jerome, Editor of Challenge.

As the 17 arrested were released Saturday night they assembled with a hundred or more supporters who had come to the night court to support them. An announcement was made that those arrested had met while inside the jail and had drawn up a press statement which ended with a call for another protest meeting to again defy the warmongers—on Saturday, Aug. 15 at 4 P.M.

Aug. 27, 1964

## 47 arrested for defying Times Square ban second time

**Youth Cry: 'Stop Vietnam War!'**

NEW YORK, Aug. 16—Hundreds of people returned to Times Square yesterday to hold the most powerful demonstration yet seen in this country against the U.S. war in Vietnam, and to protest the police-made law banning demonstrations in Times Square which has been in effect for two years.

The demonstrators were viciously and repeatedly attacked by the police, including Gestapo-like plainclothesmen.

The demonstration had been called by the 17 people arrested the previous Saturday in a similar Times Square demonstration, as soon as they had been released from jail. Both demonstrations were sponsored by the May 2nd Movement and Youth Against War and Fascism.

Vincent Copeland, editor of Workers World, who was arrested at the August 8 demonstration, was arrested again yesterday as soon as he arrived at Times Square at 4:00 P.M. Throughout the demonstration, the cops tried to pick off leaders. They later arrested Fred Goldstein, National Organizational Director of Youth Against War and Fascism.

The cops pushed the assembled demonstrators out of Times Square at 47th Street. The crowd resisted, first chanting "Let them speak." The demonstrators moved east on 47th Street, hoping to be able to speak when they reached the UN Plaza. The demonstrators brought out

their signs opposing the war in Vietnam, gave out their leaflets, and chanted "fascist cops" and "Nazi cops." Soon the cops were pushing a sea of demonstrators toward Sixth Avenue.

When the demonstrators reached Sixth Avenue, the police charged into those at the front of the line, fighting them and dragging them along. The crowd began to shout "Police brutality"; and then, "Stop the war in Vietnam—bring the troops home."

Between Sixth and Second Avenues, the cops continually fought and arrested demonstrators. They crushed the crowd against automobiles, and tore shirts. Key Martin, National Chairman of Youth Against War and Fascism, was twice beaten to the ground and clubbed in the stomach. Other demonstrators were cut in the head, injured in the knee, and injured in the ribs. ...

In all, 47 were arrested, nearly half of them youth in their late teens and early twenties. ...

At night court, bail was set for the demonstrators, singly and in pairs, all through the night and into the morning. Bail was high, \$500 for alleged disorderly conduct and \$1,000 for heavier charges. A large crowd of sympathizers welcomed the defendants as they were brought into court and bailed out.

The demonstration exposed the phony unity behind the war that the ruling class politicians called for. It showed that the war is the war of the rich, not ours. □





Colombia and Venezuela

Who’s behind the rising tensions

By Deirdre Griswold

In early January, in a unilateral move, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) released two women it had been holding. Its aim was to demonstrate it was serious about wanting to negotiate a humanitarian exchange of prisoners with the Colombian government.

An estimated 500 captured FARC fighters are held in Colombian government jails under horrendous conditions. The guerrilla group is believed to have detained about one-tenth that number of people.

On Feb. 2, President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, who had facilitated the release of the two women and provided helicopters to pick them up, announced that the FARC would soon be releasing three more people—Gloria Polanco de Losada, Luis Eladio Pérez and Orlando Beltrán Cuéllar, all former members of Colombia’s Congress—to the Venezuelan government. FARC said it was in “recognition for the persistent efforts to achieve a humanitarian accord” by Colombian Sen. Piedad Córdoba and Chávez. Córdoba, whose electoral constituency is largely Afro-Colombian, is in opposition to the current government of President Álvaro Uribe.

Since Uribe had last summer authorized the humanitarian exchange efforts, and even asked Chávez and Córdoba to make the arrangements, one might think the success of their efforts would be applauded by Uribe’s right-wing political base as easing the strife of a long civil war in their country and perhaps even leading to broader negotiations.

One might think that, but one would be wrong.

On Feb. 4, large right-wing demonstrations were held in many Colombian cities and abroad denouncing the FARC. They had been widely publicized in advance by all the major pro-government media. The Colombian stock exchange closed down for it, bosses pressured their workers to attend, and the government shut down schools and public services for the rally, according to a well-informed online report by Kiraz Janicke of the Australia-Venezuela Solidarity Network.



WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

Colombian Senator Piedad Córdoba, shown above at an environmental conference in Caracas.

What had caused Uribe and the privileged oligarchy he represents to so change their minds?

Perhaps it was the very favorable response to the FARC’s gesture from the Colombian people, including even the families of soldiers and others detained by the guerrilla group. Perhaps it was the right wing’s fear that revelations about the close link between the Uribe ruling group and the murderous Colombian paramilitaries were becoming a huge scandal.

Whatever caused the ruling circles to change their minds on the humanitarian exchanges, the demonstrations had the same flavor as the ones that preceded the coup against the pro-socialist reformer, President Salvador Allende, in Chile in 1973. In those demonstrations, it was made to appear that ordinary housewives were angry at Allende and blamed him for food shortages. In the ones in Colombia, the media emphasis was on the youth, who were said to have organized the marches

using the Internet facility Facebook.

But in both cases, the role of U.S. imperialism in encouraging, facilitating and putting a media spin on the marches cannot be denied. In Chile, the demonstrations were followed by a fascist coup d’état that put Gen. Augusto Pinochet in power. The military murdered Allende and thousands of trade unionists, socialists and communists in the first few days.

There is, of course, no progressive government to overthrow in Colombia. But U.S. imperialism and the corporations it represents, particularly the oil companies, are in an increasingly dangerous struggle with neighboring Venezuela, where Chávez has been trying to raise the educational and material level of the masses of people, using oil revenues to pay for it.

Amazingly, this is openly attacked in the U.S. business media as a “cynical maneuver” by Chávez to get mass support. How come no “cynical” U.S. politicians—and there are many of them—ever follow his

example? Are they afraid they’d be taken down by the so-called “intelligence” community, which works hand in glove with the corporations?

Colombia out of synch

Colombia has been out of synch with most of the rest of South America, especially since Chávez was elected president of Venezuela. In country after country, militant, mass protests followed by elections have ushered in governments that at the very least espouse some independence from Washington and put an emphasis on closing the huge social gap between the oligarchy and the oppressed popular masses, many of whom are Indigenous or of African ancestry.

By contrast, Uribe and his privileged political base depend on massive U.S. military aid to stay in power. This ruling group wants to tie Colombia’s economy to a “free market” agreement modeled on NAFTA. In Mexico, NAFTA has brought huge profits to U.S. agribusiness and misery to the workers and farmers, driving them to emigrate in huge numbers.

In his State of the Union address this year, President George W. Bush put a big emphasis on urging Congress to pass a trade agreement with Colombia. Three high-level U.S. officials—Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy John Walters and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice—recently visited Colombia, where they attacked Venezuela in speeches.

President Chávez has said that the U.S. is planning to use Colombia in a military aggression against his country. There is plenty of compelling evidence to support this charge.

Progressives everywhere should be prepared to answer the flood of propaganda that would accompany such an event and mobilize in solidarity with the working people of Venezuela and Colombia, who are trying to free themselves from the clutches of the profiteering U.S. transnationals and their thugs.

E-mail: dgriswold@workers.org

Venezuela battles Exxon’s corporate criminals

By Jaimeson Champion

The Venezuelan government has promised that the recent attempts by the world’s largest oil company, ExxonMobil, to steal assets that belong to the Venezuelan people will be met with stiff resistance.

ExxonMobil has been lobbying through the imperialist-controlled courts in the U.S. and Europe for a freeze on overseas assets of the Venezuelan state oil company, PDVSA. On Feb. 8, courts in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands issued injunctions, pending appeal, that would freeze approximately \$12 billion worth of PDVSA assets in Europe. A ruling in the U.S., to be issued by a Manhattan Federal Court, is scheduled for Feb. 13.

The courts’ decisions are legally sanctioned robbery. The courts that issued these rulings are part of the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes, ICSID. The ICSID is controlled by the World Bank. It operates as a group of kangaroo courts, set up to issue blanket decrees in favor of transnational corporations and financial institutions. The World Bank is assisting ExxonMobil in the attempted theft of billions of dollars worth

of assets from the Venezuelan people

In a radio address delivered on Feb. 10, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez responded to the recent court rulings saying, “I speak to the U.S. empire, because that’s the master: continue and you will see that we won’t send one drop of oil to the empire of the United States.”

The contrast between ExxonMobil and PDVSA couldn’t be starker. ExxonMobil is a bloodthirsty corporation which has left a trail of death and environmental destruction stretching from Iraq, to Nigeria, to Indonesia, to Valdez, Alaska. From massive oil spills that have destroyed entire ecosystems, to criminal wars for oil that have destroyed entire countries, ExxonMobil has developed a reputation as the epitome of corporate malfeasance and brutality. Much of Exxon’s billion upon billions of dollars in annual profits are used to further enrich the corporate executives and wealthy shareholders.

PDVSA, on the other hand, is owned and operated by the Venezuelan people, for the benefit of the Venezuelan people. In 2007, more than \$13.3 billion dollars of PDVSA’s revenues went towards social spending in Venezuela.

The money generated by PDVSA is used to pay for health care facilities and doctors, food and nutrition programs, schools and teachers, and many other social programs in Venezuela. One of PDVSA’s biggest contributions to Venezuelan society has been its work in the development of water systems around the country that now pump clean drinking water into homes that previously lacked access.

Workers at PDVSA play active roles in organizing PDVSA social projects. Through participation in what are known as workers councils, workers at PDVSA determine how to best appropriate PDVSA revenues to meet the needs of their particular communities.

ExxonMobil’s attempt to steal PDVSA assets is just the latest criminal action in what has been a long series of attacks carried out by the forces of imperialism against the people of Venezuela. Led by the U.S., the imperialist powers have attempted every tactic they can think of to try and destabilize the Bolivarian Revolution. From economic sabotage to the orchestration of student protests led by the children of the old oligarchy, to outright theft of resources, the imperialist powers have

used all the tools at their disposal.

But thus far, the attempts at derailing what Venezuelans refer to as “el proceso” or “the process”—which refers to the revolutionary transformation of Venezuelan society from capitalism to socialism—have been unsuccessful. The process continues to develop as the Venezuelan people bravely stand up to the criminal attacks perpetrated against them.

As the Venezuelan people continue the struggle against the U.S. empire, it is imperative for workers here in the U.S., and around the world, to stand in solidarity with their Venezuelan sisters and brothers, and join in their courageous fight against imperialism. □

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# Gates’ busy week making war

Defense Secretary Robert Gates has had a busy February, and it’s only half over. In Vilnius, Lithuania; in Munich, Germany; in Baghdad, Iraq; and back in Washington, he has been pumping for more war. He wants more allied troops in Afghanistan, and he overruled himself to support a “pause” in withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq. He even warned Pakistan that its government might be a target of al-Qaida forces operating in its more remote regions, part of the Bush gang’s moves to intervene directly in those areas.

There’s a lesson in all this belligerence, and maybe two or three. The first one is that those occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan are not going well for the U.S. and NATO armed forces. All boasting of the alleged gains of the “surge” aside, it looks like the Pentagon is in the same position in Iraq it was two summers ago—with just that many more deaths, injuries and refugees and just that much more psychological pain later.

In 2006, the U.S. population voted for Democrats hoping that would bring some peace, at least regarding Iraq. The Democrats haven’t even put up a decent fight on this, except maybe in election rhetoric.

The number of attacks by the Afghan resistance against the NATO occupation has been rising year by year. One report said these attacks had tripled. Casualties are growing among the occupation troops and of course among Afghan civilians, and Afghanistan has regained its place as a major exporter of opium. In other words, the occupation of Afghanistan too is a disaster.

Now that Bush’s Iraq program is obviously a fiasco for U.S. imperialist interests, many in the U.S. establishment are now critical regarding Iraq. But many of these same critics, from the New York Times to the Democratic candidates, find Afghanistan’s occupation acceptable and justifiable. Their justification is still based on the Sept. 11, 2001, events.

Never mind that the Taliban—however reactionary their program was compared to the progressive government of Afghanistan of the 1980s—had nothing to do with those attacks except that al-Qaida was their guest. Never mind that the U.S. had supplied the funds and weapons that aided the growth of both al-Qaida and the Taliban during the U.S.-funded war against the progressive Afghan regime. Never mind that six years of U.S./NATO occupation of Afghanistan have apparently done nothing to remove al-Qaida’s alleged threat, according to Gates himself.

Yet Gates’ only solution is to throw more troops into Afghanistan. He hopes they will be European troops, but he hasn’t worked that out yet. And there is no serious opposition to this strategy within the imperialist establishment, within either the Republican or Democratic parties.

These are hard lessons, but they spell out that a mass anti-war movement will have to confront the government and the military if the policies are to change. □



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## CHAD

# Rebel coalition fights neocolonial regime

By G. Dunkel

Chad, in central Africa, was brutally conquered by France over a century ago and made part of its colonial empire. Today, while nominally independent, it is the fifth poorest country in the world, according to the U.N. However, it has become a significant, though not major, exporter of oil in the past three years.

ExxonMobil, a major U.S. corporation, is currently exploiting this oil, which has also brought billions of dollars to Chad. Most of that money, however, has stayed in the pockets of President Idriss Deby Itno—a former helicopter pilot trained by the French, who seized power in 1990—and his clique, through one stratagem or another. Redistributing this wealth is one of the issues pushing forward a rebellion against Deby’s rule.

This struggle broke out into heavy fighting early in February when a rebel coalition fought for control of Ndjamená, Chad’s capital. An estimated 1,000 people died.

The Deby government claimed that most of the casualties were rebels—it called them mercenaries paid by Sudan—who didn’t know their way around the city, which has no street signs.

That’s not how the insurgents explain why they pulled back. Coalition spokesperson Abderaman Koulamallah said in an interview with Agence France Presse that direct attacks carried out by the French military had caused “enormous civilian casualties.”

Mahamat Nouri, the main military commander of the opposition, charged the French Air Force had “bombarded” its positions for over 13 hours to protect the Deby government.

During the battle for Ndjamená, which began Feb. 2-3, many of Deby’s soldiers reportedly deserted or didn’t follow orders because of ties they have with the rebels. Many of the rebels themselves were formerly in the government army. For example, Nouri himself used to be Deby’s defense minister and took a number of troops with him when he went over to the opposition.

## Union of African Workers on Chad events

*Part of a longer statement issued Feb. 10 by the Union of African Workers-Senegal (RTA-S) from Dakar, concerning the French intervention in Chad. Workers World reproduces the part below, translated from French.*

As in 2006, the Idriss Deby regime once again this year has been saved by the French Army. Everyone knows that the occupation of the Ndjamená, Chad’s capital, by the rebellious troops meant the end of the dictator’s regime and the defeat of his loyal troops.

This military support for the dictator throws a new light on the type of bonds existing between the regime of French President Nicolas Sarkozy and that of Deby. One has to expect in the days to come that the French citizens accused in the “Zoe’s Ark” affair are pardoned by Deby [French citizens charged with kidnapping Chadian children—trans.]. It’s a way of giving a payback to Sarkozy. In other words, French Africa still lives.

The Union of African Workers-Senegal denounces this interference of the French Army in the internal affairs of Chad and invites all democratic and anti-imperialist forces to raise their voices against these intrigues by French imperialism. □

While the French were willing to provide Deby with logistical, intelligence and air support and to defend the Ndjamená airport, they were not willing to put the bodies of French soldiers on the ground in harm’s way.

So Deby issued a call for reinforcements to the Justice and Equality Movement, a rebel group in Sudan fighting the government in the region of Darfur. It is drawn mainly from Deby’s ethnic group, the Zaghawas. However, Zaghawas also play a leading role among the rebel forces. (Le Figaro, Feb. 2)

The JEM troops quickly arrived on the battlefield in Chad. (New York Times, Feb. 8) The only practical way for JEM troops to have gotten from Darfur to Ndjamená, a distance of more than 600 miles, was for the French Air Force to fly them from its base in Abeche, a major city in eastern Chad not far from the border with Sudan.

The Sudanese government has announced that it will allow U.N.-African Union “peacekeepers” to move about freely in Darfur, but the JEM has just announced that it will attack them whenever they enter JEM-controlled areas.

The French press on Feb. 10 reported that the opposition had seized two major towns in the eastern part of the country. It also reported that EUFOR—with some 4,700 soldiers drawn from the armies of the 27 countries in the European Union—had begun setting up an advance base in Ndjamená, called Camp Europa. Full deployment of EUFOR is set to begin Feb. 12.

EUFOR, which stands for European Union Forces, has been used before in Bosnia and the Congo. While its commander and a large proportion of its troops are French, it does have a U.N. mandate to protect Sudanese refugees in Chad and the Central African Republic, distribute humanitarian aid and train Chadian police.

Its real aim is to project and protect Europe’s imperialist interests in the strategic center of Africa, bordering on the hotspot of Darfur.

Dr. Ley-Ngardigal Djimadoum, the leader of Chad’s Action for Unity and Socialism (ACTUS), at the beginning of February released a statement in French on a number of African and European anti-imperialist web sites.

Djimadoum said that, “Almost all the Chadian opposition is very hostile to EUFOR in Chad. The presence of French military bases, under the pretext of defending the territorial integrity of an ‘independent’ state, from independence [1960] to now, leaves a bitter taste. In reality, these occupation troops only defend the economic interests of the multinationals and the geostrategic interests of the imperialists on the African continent.

“A number of mass revolts and rebellions against the dictators imposed on our people by French imperialism have been drowned in blood by the support and the direct participation of French troops besides the army of their puppet government.

“The humanitarian aid proposed by EUFOR is a tree which hides the forest. More competent civilian organizations have been in place for years.”

The budget for EUFOR’s operation is nearly \$450 million, close to twice the yearly income of Chad’s 9.3 million people.

The coalition that attacked Ndjamená independently issued a statement condemning France’s role, while avoiding the sharp language Djimadoum used.

Chad is an extremely poor but highly strategic country that has been waging an unrelenting struggle, with many twists and turns, against French neocolonialism for over 40 years. The intervention of European imperialism through EUFOR is going to raise the stakes, but is unlikely to end the drive of the people of Chad for their liberation. □



Gates protested in Munich

NATO, expanding, shows its cracks

By John Catalinotto

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, at a NATO meeting in Munich on Feb. 10, threatened the European population with alleged terrorist threats to their security. Gates insisted that the Europeans should be ready to send their youth to be cannon fodder in U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and elsewhere in Asia.

At the heart of Gates’s comments is the contradictory relationship between U.S. imperialism and its European imperialist allies regarding the future of the NATO military alliance.

“I am concerned that many people on this continent may not comprehend the magnitude of the direct threat to European security,” Gates said at the Munich Conference on Security Policy as 7,000 anti-war activists, most of them Germans, protested outside. To the hall filled with defense or foreign ministers from 40 countries, he added: “So now I would like to ... speak directly to the people of Europe. The threat posed by violent Islamic extremism is real and it is not going to go away.”

Gates’s heavy-handed message was aimed especially at the people of Germany, who are reluctant to send their youth into combat in southern Afghanistan. Germany’s 3,500-troop contingent in the war has been operating in the relative quiet of northern Afghanistan. The German government has presented its troops’ intervention in the North as limited to reconstruction work, but 25 German soldiers have died there.

Gates even acknowledged, seemingly without hostility, that Europeans oppose the U.S. role in Iraq. He tried to separate the military occupation of Afghanistan from that of Iraq, in the hope of winning over more European popular support.

In an ARD German television poll held Feb. 4 and 5, only 13 percent of those polled backed sending combat units to Afghanistan. Protesters in the streets of Munich who said they wanted no German participation against Afghanistan, Pakistan or Iran were obviously closer to public opinion than German officials were.

Split in NATO?

At a high-level NATO conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, held Feb. 7-8, Gates had also argued vehemently for more German and other European NATO participation in Afghanistan. He spoke of a “split in NATO” between “those who are willing to fight and those who are not.” The rightist Canadian regime—which has sent troops to fight and die in southern Afghanistan—has said that if others in NATO don’t join the effort, it will pull out.

Currently the German government—a “grand coalition” of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats led by rightist Chancellor Angela Merkel—is ordering

a “quick-reaction” combat unit of 250 troops to northern Afghanistan to replace a Norwegian unit. She is also asking the Bundestag (Parliament) to approve the German presence in Afghanistan until 2010, so the issue won’t arise during the next national elections in the fall of 2009.

A report in the news magazine Der Spiegel that up to 4,500 German troops will soon be in Afghanistan was denied by the government.

The German ruling class and its government are caught between the overwhelmingly anti-war population and their own imperialist interests. Germany is the world’s largest exporter. Its ruling class at present depends on the military strength of U.S. imperialism to maintain stability—that is, the oppression of the poor nations and the working people of the world.

Now some of the German corporate media are trying to convince the population that “sooner or later Germans have to send troops to southern Afghanistan.” They are demanding sacrifices from the masses so Germany can be a major imperialist player in the world. (Cologne Stadt-Anzeiger)

Victoria Nuland, the U.S. ambassador to NATO, made U.S. demands on Germany even clearer in an article in the

daily newspaper Berliner Zeitung. “We will be urgently requesting all our allies, including Germany, at the NATO summit in Bucharest [Romania] in April to match us soldier for soldier, euro for dollar,” she wrote. (Deutsche Welle, Feb. 9)

NATO’s April meeting

With the downfall of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact military alliance, NATO lost its historic role of confronting the socialist world on behalf of Western European and U.S. imperialism. In a NATO meeting in April 1999, while Pentagon bombs were destroying Yugoslavia and underscoring U.S. military dominance, Washington laid out its plans for NATO. It was to remain under U.S. leadership and be a worldwide intervention force if necessary to keep both the former socialist countries and the neo-colonies of the West in line.

More and more frequently, U.S. imperialism, while losing its economic advantages to competitors in many areas, has been relying on its global military superiority to impose its demands on other imperialist powers.

Attending the summit in April will be a dozen new NATO members from Eastern Europe and the former USSR—

most of them client states lined up with Washington. NATO is actively intervening not only in the former Yugoslavia but in far-off Afghanistan.

The issues to be discussed in Bucharest represent a danger to the world’s people: Afghanistan; NATO expansion to the East, with the placement of U.S. anti-missile weapons in Poland and the Czech Republic; the secession of Kosovo from Serbia. There is even a proposal by five former NATO commanders that NATO adopt a strategy allowing first use of nuclear weapons. Many of these issues involve direct provocations against Russia as well as a threat to Iran, North Korea and other countries that refuse to bow before imperialist orders.

U.S. policies threaten new wars. At the same time that NATO is discussing this military expansion, the success of resistance forces in stopping the Pentagon in Iraq and pinning down NATO in Afghanistan has exposed the cracks in NATO’s foundation. Economic competition among the NATO powers will only grow as the U.S. economic crisis spreads around the world. More important, popular resistance to being used as cannon fodder for U.S. and European imperialist interests can put the expansion on hold. □

The European Union acts like a colonial power in the Balkans

*Following is an interview by Yugoslavia scholar Cathrin Schütz with Branko Kitanovic, general secretary of the New Communist Party of Yugoslavia (NKPJ), and published in the German daily newspaper Junge Welt on Feb. 12. The Belgrade-based NKPJ was established in 1990 and has its departments in all former republics of Yugoslavia. Schütz and Kitanovic discuss mainly Yugoslavia and European imperialism, but U.S. imperialism played a similar role as its European allies, and of course led the military assault on Yugoslavia. —WW editors*

**Cathrin Schütz:** The West’s favorite candidate, Serbia’s President Boris Tadic, has just been confirmed in office. What position did the New Communist Party of Yugoslavia (NKPJ) take during the election campaign?

**Branko Kitanovic:** We supported Tadic’s opponent Tomislav Nikolic from the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), who lost by a small margin. He represents an anti-imperialist position, which refuses to accept either the separation of Kosovo or the membership of Serbia in NATO and the European Union, even though his position towards the EU is ambivalent. We are a Marxist-Leninist party and categori-

cally against NATO, not only because it bombed our country in 1999, but because it is an aggressive alliance that supports the policy of the leading western states by military means. We are against Serbia’s entry into EU. The European Union is a creature of big western capital, especially German, English and French. The EU acts like a colonial power towards Eastern Europe and the Balkans. An EU membership would be a harder imprisonment than the ones we suffered under Ottoman or Austrian rule.

**CS:** So you support the SRS because of its foreign policy?

**BK:** Right. It is a bourgeois, patriotic party and we do have different ideas on how to achieve the national liberation of our country. The SRS stands for “honest capitalism,” for “fair privatization.” That’s nonsense. Any privatization of public property is theft. Nevertheless, the SRS, which is presently the strongest patriotic party in Serbia, struggles against the government, which carries out the interests of the West. Of course, we as communists are patriots, too.

**CS:** The term “patriotism” is upsetting to progressive movements in Germany.

**BK:** Patriotism is a characteristic of anti-imperialism. As Germany itself is an imperialist country, you probably understand the term “patriotism” as meaning support of imperialism. For us, it has a defensive character. We fight for our sovereignty and national integrity, and as a party, for the reestablishment of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The FRY had deficiencies, for example, Serbia did not enjoy the same rights as the other republics. However: even the worst socialism is better than the best capitalism.

**CS:** During the 1999 war, the majority of the western left did not oppose their governments’ anti-Serbian agitation and shared the position that then-President Slobodan Milosevic was responsible for

the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. What was your relationship to the Milosevic government?

**BK:** Since its establishment in 1990, the NKPJ supported the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), whose chairperson was Milosevic. The international circumstances at the beginning of the 1990s forced Milosevic to adapt to some sort of social democratic line and to carry out some limited privatizations. I think that he thought that this was the way Serbia could exist in peace. It turned out to be an error. The West, Germany and the UK in particular, wanted to destroy first Yugoslavia and than Serbia. In the end, Milosevic was harmed by not having followed a stricter ideological line. He was surrounded by the wrong people, many of whom turned out to be traitors. We did not support the bourgeois orientation of his party, but we completely stood behind the anti-imperialist features of his foreign policy.

During the years when Milosevic was president, we were able to participate in all elections. Since the pro-western “democrats” had come to power by the coup in October 2000, they made unconstitutionally high demands for the registration for the elections that we still have been unable to fulfill even once.

**CS:** How will you remember Slobodan Milosevic?

**BK:** In some respect, he cooperated with the West as president of Serbia and Yugoslavia. After he had been extradited and stood before the Yugoslav tribunal in The Hague, he was incredible. What he did not fully understand before—he realized much better then. In The Hague he made sure the truth was heard. He exposed the methods which the western states used to destroy Yugoslavia and the rest of the world. “Slobo” will go down in history as a symbol of the worldwide anti-imperialist struggle.

Translation by Zoran Sergievski

Washington and NATO strategists invoked humanitarian principles to justify their war. But they practiced the divide-and-conquer tactics used by empires since the days of Imperial Rome.

Hidden Agenda: U.S./NATO takeover of Yugoslavia

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## Las masas mexicanas protestan contra el TLCAN

Por Teresa Gutiérrez

Decenas de miles de campesin@s y pequeñ@s agricultor@s llegaron con sus tractores y otros vehículos desde todas las partes de México para reunirse en la Ciudad de México el pasado 31 de enero. A ell@s se unieron activistas de prominentes sindicatos militantes en una tremenda muestra de unidad entre trabajador@s de la ciudad y del campo. Sus demandas: la revocación del Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte, conocido como NAFTA por sus siglas en inglés.

Con esta acción, l@s campesin@s mexican@s destacaron un fenómeno mundial que nunca se le oye relatar a los eruditos derechistas como Lou Dobbs o a los candidatos republicanos que intentan utilizar y culpar a l@s inmigrantes de los problemas de la sociedad. Más de 180 millones de trabajador@s alrededor del planeta han sido forzad@s a salir de sus patrias como resultado de las políticas económicas capitalistas en una de las migraciones más grandes en la historia de la humanidad.

Esta migración forzada es cruel y atormentadora. La gente que deja sus países en África, Asia, el Caribe y América Latina arriesga su vida en busca de subsistencia. Los súper ricos en los centros imperialistas han utilizado su mano de obra barata y prescindible para expandir el capitalismo, el mismo sistema en que sus políticos hacen campaña para deportar a migrantes en números record. Como en épocas anteriores de crecimiento capitalista como fue la genocida y brutal trata de esclav@s—que resultó en la masacre de decenas de millones de african@s—l@s trabajador@s de hoy también son tratad@s como mercancía desechable.

¿Qué está causando la migración sin precedentes de trabajador@s de los países oprimidos hacia los países capitalistas económicamente dominantes?

El Presidente Bill Clinton firmó la ley del Tratado de Libre Comercio en diciembre de 1993 y forzó a millones de trabajador@s y campesin@s mexican@s a salir de sus tierras y cruzar la frontera hacia los Estados Unidos.

Cruzar la frontera—con o sin documentos—no es nada nuevo para l@s trabajador@s mexican@s, quienes han estado relacionad@s por siglos con la frontera México/EEUU. Pero el TLC ha intensificado la situación de extrema pobreza del pueblo mexicano.

Desde el primer día, l@s mexican@s han protestado en contra del TLC. El primordialmente indígena Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, (EZLN), entró al mundo político exactamente el 1º de enero de 1994, el mismo día en que el TLC entraba en vigencia en México, precisamente para protestar contra el tratado.

Un punto principal de la lucha en



Ciudad de México, 31 de enero.

México en contra del TLC ha sido una enmienda a un artículo importante de la Constitución mexicana, el Artículo 27. Este artículo fue logrado durante la Revolución Mexicana en 1910 y prohibía la venta de tierras campesinas comunales conocidas como “ejidos.” El éxito de los imperialistas estadounidenses en agregar esta enmienda se convirtió en pesadilla para l@s campesin@s mexican@s.

Hoy la lucha contra el TLCNA no solo sigue sino que se está intensificando.

### ‘Sin maíz, no hay país’

Un lema de este floreciente movimiento popular que se reunió el 2 de enero para organizar la actividad del 31 de enero es, “sin maíz, no hay país”. Los grupos campesinos, todos miembros del Diálogo Nacional, demandaron que el Congreso mexicano así como las Comisiones Agrarias y Permanentes Mexicanas revoken el TLCNA.

La declaración que representa a cientos de grupos en parte dice: “Durante los 14 años del TLCNA, el desempleo, la inmigración, la destrucción de nuestras actividades agrícolas, la concentración de recursos en unas pocas manos, el deterioro del poder adquisitivo y los salarios, y la pobreza extrema han aumentado de una manera alarmante”.

Un instituto mexicano notó en agosto de 2007 que: “México tiene más de 6,4 millones de personas desempleadas, que representa un 13 por ciento de los 49,35 millones de mexicanos en edad de trabajar. Durante los seis años de la presidencia de Vicente Fox, 3,26 millones de personas emigraron —lo que es un promedio de 500.000 por año”. La declaración continúa diciendo que: “Según las estadísticas de octubre de 2004, un 1,5 por ciento estimado de la población entera del país controla aproximadamente la tercera parte del valor total de bienes y servicios” y “las familias más pobres sobreviven con 86 pesos por día mientras que las más

ricas reciben 1.296 pesos a diario”.

La organización campesina también demanda que el TLCNA sea remplazado por un modelo nuevo, uno que “esté basado en el respeto y que desarrolle la propiedad social de la tierra y que proporcione un presupuesto federal para ayudar a los pobres” y a los campesinos de ingresos medianos.

Demanda que “la soberanía y la autosuficiencia en la alimentación sean las metas de la transformación de la economía nacional, porque sin maíz y frijoles, no hay país”.

Otra demanda revolucionaria es “evitar la proliferación de los organismos modificados genéticamente (OMG) que son malos para nuestra salud”. L@s campesin@s mexican@s están documentando que las semillas naturales del país están comenzando a desaparecer. L@s campesin@s están forzad@s a sembrar semillas híbridas que vienen de corporaciones imperialistas como la Monsanto (de EEUU) y la Bayer (de Alemania). Las plantas que crecen de estas semillas no producen nuevas semillas, aumentando aún más la dependencia en esas compañías.

“Los campos no pueden aguantar más”, dice una de las consignas en las protestas.

Hablando en un mitin en contra del TLCNA, Lucha Castro, una prominente abogada y activista de la mujer denunció, “El TLCNA y las políticas relacionadas del gobierno son responsables de expulsar a 5 millones de personas de las zonas rurales de México. Apenas un 2 por ciento de las unidades productivas agrícolas de México se benefician del tratado, mientras que un 80 por ciento de las exportaciones agrícolas de México está controlado por capital extranjero.

“Para competir con los Estados Unidos todos estos años, los bosques y la tierra han sido devastados, y nuestros acuíferos han sido súper explotados,” siguió Castro.

“L@s consumidor@s mexican@s no se han beneficiado de mejores precios. En 1994, se podían comprar 20 kilos de tortillas y ocho kilos de frijoles con un salario mínimo. Hoy en día, sólo se pueden comprar seis kilos de tortillas y tres kilos de frijoles.”

### El movimiento contra el TLCAN toma fuerza

Estas horrendas circunstancias están despertando una lucha militante. Un periódico importante en el norte de México, Frontera Norte-Sur, escribe que el TLCAN está despertando “el espíritu de Pancho Villa”, líder de la Revolución Mexicana, especialmente en el norte de México.

El 18 de enero, en una fría mañana, trabajador@s y campesin@s del Movimiento de Resistencia Campesina Francisco Villa se reunieron en Ciudad Juárez para comenzar una caravana de tractores a la

Ciudad de México. Las bajas temperaturas habían causado muertes por hipotermia y envenenamiento por monóxido de carbono, según reportó Frontera Norte-Sur.

El MRCFV estaba demandando que el gobierno mexicano renegociara el TLCAN bajo la consigna de la “Campaña Nacional ¡Sin maíz, no hay país!”.

La caravana de tractores siguió la misma ruta que usó Pancho Villa en su marcha a la Ciudad de México en 1914, y se reuniría con otr@s manifestantes el 31 de enero en la Ciudad de México.

Uno de los líderes veteranos del movimiento le dijo a la prensa que “los tractores viejos en la caravana son lo mejor de la cosecha en el campo donde los bueyes y las mulas todavía dejan surcos en la tierra.” Tan diferente de la agropecuaria estadounidense.

La oposición al TLCAN siguió creciendo. Oficiales elect@s de ambos partidos principales respaldaron el llamado del movimiento. Legislaturas estatales aprobaron resoluciones en apoyo a las demandas. Varios obispos prominentes se han adherido a la campaña. Organizaciones campesinas que al principio aprobaban el TLCAN ahora demandan revisiones. Campesin@s de varios estados han acusado que el TLCAN viola la Constitución mexicana, y estas acusaciones pueden forzar a la Corte Suprema Mexicana a revisar la constitucionalidad del TLCAN.

El movimiento que se manifestó el 31 de enero ha anunciado que su próxima acción será entrar en el Congreso Mexicano y bloquear las cámaras el 7 de febrero.

Catorce años de sufrimiento a causa del TLCAN han forzado al pueblo mexicano a cruzar la frontera. Pero su continua lucha muestra que la represión engendra resistencia, y que los acuerdos imperialistas como el TLCAN pueden y deben ser revocados y derrocados. □